

**Abstract of the Invention**

Methods, systems and computer-readable data storage media for authentication and/or access authorization in a communications network. A source node initiates a request for network services, such as session establishment, database access, or application access. Known network resources, authorized user, and/or source information are stored in a database at a network portal along with access policy rules that can be device and/or user dependent. A source node can construct a packet header including a user identifier indicating the user originating the request, and/or a source identifier indicating the hardware from which the request is originated. At least one of these identifiers are included with a synchronization packet for transmission to a destination node. An appliance or firewall in the communications network receives, authenticates, and determines whether resource access is authorized before releasing the packet to its intended destination.